Migration to and from South-East Europe. Three different perspectives

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with 8 tables in the text

Content

Summary

The article examines population development with a focus on migration in post-WWII South-East Europe (SEE) – this macro-region understood as composed of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and Hungary. While today the impression prevails that SEE suffers from continued population decline, decline is demonstrated to be a phenomenon just of the period after the fall of the Iron Curtain, with remarkable population growth in the period before. Emigration from SEE is directed to both Western Europe and other countries of the region. It means in general brain drain and economic loss for the region. As revealed by a

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survey carried out in 2010 in Serbia, emigration potential is high especially with the younger and better educated due to dissatisfaction with the current economic, social and political situation.

1 Preliminary notes

The main aim of this contribution is to present an overview of demographic developments in South-East Europe with a special emphasis on migration. However, the presentation of an overview of migration in South-East Europe is difficult due to the complex situation in this area. The established definition of international migration based on the UN recommendation (United Nations 1998) – a change in place of living over national borders, lasting a least between three and twelve months – is not applicable to the data available from many official statistical offices in South-East Europe (Gárdos & Gödri 2014). With the sole exception of Slovenia, there are no South-East European countries that have robust population registers and so all demographic indices should be used and considered with care.[1]

Apart from these statistical considerations, the following article will present three different perspectives that shed light on migration to and from South-East Europe. The first chapter presents a general overview of population development, beginning with the 1950s and with a specific focus on the net migration based on UN data (Fassmann, Musil & Gruber 2014; Fassmann, Musil, Bauer, Melegh & Gruber 2014). The second chapter offers a description of the size and structure of emigration from South-East Europe reflected by the Austrian microcensus. Finally, a short analysis of potential emigration from South-East Europe exemplified by the information of a specific survey from Serbia will be characterised (Fassmann 2012).

2 South-East Europe: Demographic developments

2.1 Population growth and decline

South-East Europe – being the states of the Former Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece and Hungary – is quite diverse; the countries differ politically and economically, but also in terms of their historical development.[2] Some countries are

[1] More than this: one can study the relationship between the process of collecting statistical information and national interests. In many countries of South-East Europe the census includes people who are "temporarily absent" to keep the population number as high as possible. Few countries would readily admit that their population is decreasing due to emigration and a declining expectation of wealth and security for the people who stay.

[2] South-East Europe is a highly disputed geographical category. Especially the question

European Union (EU) member states, others are candidate countries, and others still are outside the EU with or without a future perspective of becoming a member (so-called 'third countries'). From a historical perspective, it is difficult to imagine this group as a homogenous space. From a demographic perspective it is less difficult, as the demographic processes in South-East Europe have been similar, as will be shown in this research.

South-East Europe became an area of demographic growth in the past 60 years, growing from a population of roughly 58 million inhabitants in 1950 to 70 million in 1970 and 79 million in 1990. Therefore, the predominant perception of population decline in the region is misleading. An increase over 40 years of around 21 million people (around 36%) is startling and in 1990, shortly before the fall of the Iron Curtain and a new era of national independence, the population in South-East Europe was the highest it had ever been.

Table 1: **South-East Europe: Population development 1950-2011**

Country	1950	1970	1990	Census 2001	Census 2011	Change in % from 2001
Albania	1,214	2,139	3,447	3,069,275	2,821,977	-8.1
Bosnia-Herzegovina	2,661	3,564	4,308	3.922.205	3,791,622	-3.3
Bulgaria	7,251	8,490	8,819	7,928,901	7,364,570	-7.1
Greece	7,566	8,793	10,161	10,964,020	10,815,197	-1.4
Kosovo				2,000,000	1,800,000	-10.0
Croatia	3,850	4,169	4,517	4,437,460	4,284.889	-3.4
Macedonia	1,230	1,568	1,909	2,022,547	2,062,294	2.0
Montenegro	399	519	609	620,145	625,266	0.8
Romania	16,311	20,253	23,207	21,699,700	20,121,641	-7.3
Serbia	6,732	8,173	9,569	7,498,001	7,120,666	-5.0
Slovenia	1,473	1,670	1,927	1,964,036	2,061,085	4.9
Hungary	9,338	10,315	10,376	10,198,315	9,908,798	-2.8
South-East Europe in total	**58,025**	**69,653**	**78,849**	**76,324,605**	**72,778,005**	**-4.6**

Sources: For 1950, 1970 and 1990: United Nations 2015, World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision. URL: http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/panel_population.htm; 28/02/2015; for 2001 and 2011: Census returns published by the offices of national statistics; the exceptions: Bosnia and Herzegovina (preliminary results); Macedonia (aborted census 2011; updated status 31/12/2013); Slovenia (Census count as of 31/12/2013)

of whether Hungary and Romania are included has not been answered uniformly (Clewing & Schmitt 2011)

However, population figures have dropped since the fall of the Iron Curtain, as shown by the population of 73 million people in the 2010s, a decrease in 4.6% or -0.46% per year. This fall in population is particularly the case for Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia, with those countries having a rate of at least 5% over ten years. Albania's population shows the highest decrease in the region with 8.1%. During the Socialist period of the country, the population of Albania tripled, and Romania, Bulgaria and Bosnia-Herzegovina saw a pronounced population growth. The historical growth is, to an extent receding, but when looked at over a longer period, the extent of that decline is relativised.

2.2 Fertility decline and convergence

One of the causes of population growth in South-East Europe between 1950 and 1990 was the high fertility levels and the further consequences of a relatively young age structure. At the beginning of the 1950s, the age-standardised and period-specific fertility rates (total fertility rate = TFR) were 6.11 in Albania, 4.82 in Bosnia-Herzegovina and around 4 in Montenegro and Macedonia, a particularly high rate. The

Table 2: **Total fertility rate (period fertility), 1950-2010**

Country	1950-1955	1960-1965	1970-1975	1980-1985	1990-1995	1995-2000	2000-2005	2005-2010
Albania	6.11	5.86	4.76	3.40	2.83	2.59	2.15	1.75
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4.82	3.81	2.63	1.99	1.53	1.54	1.23	1.22
Bulgaria	2.53	2.22	2.16	2.02	1.55	1.20	1.24	1.43
Croatia	2.76	2.27	1.96	1.96	1.52	1.54	1.36	1.43
Macedonia	4.01	3.59	2.87	2.50	2.16	1.81	1.58	1.48
Greece	2.29	2.20	2.32	1.96	1.37	1.30	1.28	1.46
Hungary	2.69	1.86	2.06	1.82	1.74	1.38	1.30	1.33
Montenegro	4.03	3.26	2.63	2.17	1.81	1.84	1.78	1.73
Romania	2.87	1.95	2.62	2.25	1.51	1.31	1.28	1.34
Serba	3.22	2.57	2.36	2.32	1.96	1.74	1.55	1.41
Slovenia	2.58	2.34	2.21	1.87	1.36	1.25	1.23	1.44
South-East Europe in total	**3.16**	**2.66**	**2.38**	**2.02**	**1.61**	**1.46**	**1.33**	**1.34**

Source: United Nations 2015, World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision.
URL: http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/panel_population.htm; 28/02/2015

southern South-East European countries, with agrarian and Muslim influences, entered this transformative transitional phase at the beginning of the 1950s. In Hungary, Bulgaria, Greece and Slovenia, however, this so-called 'first demographic transition', characterised by the rising gap between the lower mortality rates and higher birth rates, occurred at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.

In the 1970s and 1980s the fertility rate in all countries of South-East Europe fell, but this became much more pronounced following the fall of the Iron Curtain. The introduction of a completely new socio-economic system, the removal of rewards for larger families (financial aids and larger flats), and increased poverty for whole sections of society led to a rapid fall in birth rates. In some countries, other elements explain the significant decrease of the total fertility rate (TFR). For example, in Romania the law forbidding abortions, decreed in the 1960s to increase the population size, was changed in 1990. However, more than this: A pessimistic economic outlook always leads to a decline in fertility rates.

The differences that existed between the East and West in terms of regional disparities of reproductive behaviour have also largely disappeared. The second demographic transition characterised by birth rates sinking below the mortality rates and therefore producing a natural population decline, is generally speaking the case for the whole region (VAN DER KAA 2008). In 2010, only two countries – Albania and Montenegro – had a TFR over 1.5, which is also insufficient sustaining the population levels. The reported TFR for the whole region was 1.34, placing it without any doubt in the lowest fertility regions of the EU-27, which has an average of 1.53 (2010).

2.3 Net migration: Development and geographical pattern

The low fertility rate – and consequent low birth rate – are the reasons for the middle and long-term decline in population. The cause of the short-term fall in population lies with the dominant emigration, not just for the period following the fall of the Iron Curtain, but for the whole period under consideration. As regards fertility decline and the increase in life expectancy, the collapse of the Communist regimes in South-East Europe seems to be overemphasised, but this is not the case for the emigration-related developments. Since 1950, South-East Europe has shown a negative emigration balance of almost 5 million people, measured for the whole population this accounts for an almost 10% population loss.

Migration has developed in different ways within the individual countries and was linked to the internal political and economic crises, and migration-related political decisions. The support for guest-worker migration through bilateral agreements with Germany, Austria and Switzerland on one side, and Yugoslavia on the other, also contributed greatly to the negative migration balance in South-East Europe in the 1960s

and 1970s. The oil crisis, along with the end of the active recruitment from abroad at the beginning of the 1970s led to an almost neutral migration balance (see Table 3).

Table 3: **Estimated international migration balance, 1950-2010 (residual method; in thousands)**

Country	1950-1960	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-1995	1995-2000	2000-2005	2005-2010
Albania	-9	-9	-9	48	-391	-303	-290	-151
Bosnia-Herzegovina	-177	-296	-160	-46	-1025	233	38	-19
Bulgaria	-162	-8	-138	-206	-356	-107	-83	-83
Greece	35	-244	341	273	465	297	54	54
Croatia	-140	-145	10	221	-93	-201	- 30	-0
Macedonia	-45	-70	-76	-125	-130	29	4	-9
Montenegro	-1	-23	-24	-21	-19	-21	-6	-3
Romania	-27	-27	-30	-248	-411	-328	-52	-55
Serbia	-15	-178	-13	-38	428	-203	-324	-241
Slovenia	-43	- 36	45	109	-16	1	17	45
Hungary	-150	- 6	45	-219	97	79	66	96
South-East Europe in total	**-733**	**-1040**	**-9**	**-253**	**-1453**	**-524**	**-605**	**-365**

Source: United Nations 2015, World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision.
URL: http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/panel_population.htm; 28/02/2015

The estimated figures of the migration balance following the fall of the Iron Curtain in the 1990s are particularly high. However, there are also strong inter-regional complexities. Emigration from Bosnia-Herzegovina as a consequence of the Balkan wars at the beginning of the 1990s was at the same time immigration to Serbia and Croatia. Emigration from Albania for economic reasons meant immigration to Greece. The same was true for migration from Romania to Hungary. South-East Europe is not only interlinked with Western Europe, but also with the other states within the region.

The UN Population Division detects a degree of stabilisation that has been reached and that the international net-migration balance is tending in the long-term to return to a positive one. This is, however, still a point of speculation. Countries such as Serbia, Albania and Romania are still particularly hard hit by out-migration. In the past decade, the negative rate of out-migration has reached -565,000 for Serbia (for a population of around 7 million people), -441,000 for the much smaller Albania (population: 2.8

million) and -110,000 for Romania. In reality, this negative migration balance could be even higher. Romanian statistics, however, include people who are "temporarily absent". Therefore the official population number seems to be overestimated and the calculated migration balance underestimated.

3 Migration from South-East Europe: the Austrian perspective

Migration out of South-East Europe is for some countries a migration to Western Europe, particularly – due to social and historical links – to Austria, Switzerland and Germany. As with a mirror statistic, the perspective can be altered, looking instead at net-migration to immigration to these states. Due to the availability of excellent statistical data, Austria presents itself as a good example for this exercise.

3.1 Size of the migration from South-East Europe

In the years 2004-2013, Austria has shown a migration surplus of +337,000 people. This positive balance is significant, equivalent to the population of a small Austrian federal state (of which Austria is divided into nine). Austria is therefore – also politically acknowledged – an immigration country.

Of this surplus of +337,000 migrants, 138,000 are from South-East European countries and therefore represent 41% of the net migration. With accession to EU in 2004 and 2007 and the expiry of transitional rules restricting the freedom of migration, the share of migrants coming from South-East European countries has risen, reaching 50.3% in 2013. South-East Europe is therefore – statistically speaking – an extremely important region for Austrian in-migration. From the opposite perspective, Austria is an important target destination for emigration, along with Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Greece (especially for out-migration from Albania).

Particularly important for Austria are the South-East European countries Romania, Serbia, Hungary and Bosnia-Herzegovina, countries representing 80% of incoming migrants. Whilst the migration of people from the West Balkan states has stagnated, the rates for people coming from the new EU member states has risen considerably. The integration of Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria into the common European migration zone is therefore the most important development since the guest worker migrations.

Table 4: **Immigration to Austria: Migration balance with the South-East European countries, 2004-2013**

Country	2004	2007	2010	2013	Total 2004-2013
Albania	168	78	36	177	1.065
Bosnia-Herzegovina	2,632	890	530	2.416	13.851
Bulgaria	567	1,201	1,225	1,615	9.784
Greece	31	42	179	775	2.080
Croatia	787	162	18	2,826	5.162
Macedonia	1,043	407	514	692	5.466
Montenegro	.	38	12	80	226
Romania	1,861	5,752	4,986	5,700	38.849
Serbia	6,762	476	1,484	2,060	23.492
Slovenia	180	196	198	1,630	4.284
Hungary	988	1,767	2,163	8,456	29.922
South-East Europe total	15,019	11,009	11,633	27,505	137.614
Migration balance Austria	50,826	25,470	21,316	54,728	336.980
Share of South-East Europe in the total migration balance in %	**29.5**	**43.2**	**54.6**	**50.3**	**40.8**

Source: own calculations based on www.statistik.gv.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/wanderungen/wanderungen_mit_dem_ausland_aussenwanderungen/index.html (28.2.2015)

3.2 Structural characteristics of in-migration

Using the Austrian microcensus it is possible to analyse one step further by looking at who those people migrating from South-East Europe to Austria are and what attributes they bring with them. However, there are statistical limitations: the microcensus is a stratified, random sampling of around 1% of the households located in Austria. Due to this limitation given by the number of interviews, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about those coming from specific and small countries. Therefore a more broad geographical classification is used – like EU-2 (Romania and Bulgaria) or West Balkans (Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo) – to characterise migration from South-East Europe.

Table 5: **Age of the population by citizenship (in %)**

	Austria	Western Europe	EU-10	EU-2	West Balkans	Rest of the world	Total
Under 15	14.5	12.0	14.3	16.8	25.2	17.1	14.7
15-40	30.4	41.4	47.3	40.1	52.0	50.1	32.1
40-65	36.5	35.6	35.5	37.4	21.1	27.3	36.1
Over 65	18.5	11.0	2.8	5.6	1.7	5.5	17.1
Total	**7,399,652**	**214,633**	**110,698**	**72.057**	**291,098**	**246,294**	**8,334,432**

Source: own calculations based on the microcensus 4/2011 (made available by Statistik Austria)

A first count related to the age structure of the population living in Austria according to country of origin allows conclusions concerning the strongest motives to migrate: high numbers of 25-45 years old suggest a strong labour-market orientation. When dealing with higher numbers of older people it might be assumed that migration is a result of push factors (political crisis, conflicts, wars, etc.) independent from the signals of the labour market in the countries of origin and destination.

Migration to Austria between 2004 and 2007 from the EU member states – and for the West Balkan countries – is clearly a labour migration one. The main employment ages dominate and the proportion of older people is below average. It is only for the former Yugoslavian countries that the number of migrants under 15 (25%) is markedly higher than the average. This is a result of the higher fertility rates amongst women from these countries who have been in Austria for a longer time already, but it is also a consequence of the more muted future perspectives (Kosovo and Serbia) and a higher number of asylum seekers.

The microcensus also recorded information about the highest level of education completed according to country of origin and shows a similar differentiation. Migrants from the West Balkans vary greatly from the migrants from Romania and Bulgaria or the countries that joined the EU in 2004. Of persons from the West Balkans living in Austria, 46% have only completed compulsory schooling. In comparison, the number of qualified migrants is much lower. The picture is very different for the qualification profile of the migrants from EU-10 and EU-12 countries. Almost half of the migrants from countries which joined the EU in 2004 (for example Hungary) living in Austria have completed high school or have a qualification from a higher education institute (degree-level or equivalent), for migrants from Romania and Bulgaria it is almost 40%.

Table 6: **Highest level of education of persons aged 15 years+ according to nationality (in %)**

	Austria	West Europe	EU-10	EU-2	West Balkans	Rest of the world	Total
Compulsory education	24.1	11.5	12.2	17.9	46.5	49.0	25.1
Apprenticeship	36.8	24.9	29.3	35.7	33.0	11.1	35.5
Vocational secondary school	13.8	9.4	9.1	7.6	6.0	4.4	13.0
Grammar school	13.9	21.5	31.1	26.3	12.8	14.6	14.4
University	11.4	32.7	18.4	12.6	1.8	20.9	12.0
Total	**6,325,051**	**188,884**	**94,856**	**53,919**	**242,111**	**204,190**	**7,109,011**

Source: own calculations based on the microcensus 4/2011 (made available by Statistik Austria)

In this way, it is clear that 'brain drain' plays an important role for the countries of South-East Europe. This is also the case in the West Balkans, but the numbers for the post-guest worker migration also remain high.[3] A young and well-educated section of society does not consider their home country capable of providing the same development opportunities available in the wider European migration zone. Many individual studies carried out in the various sending countries have reported a high degree of willingness to migrate and have classified this as one of the most important and pressing socio-political challenges facing South-East Europe (Horvath 2004; Breinbauer 2008). "As a result, brain drain of highly skilled individuals and more generally of the most dynamic parts of the population of SEE (i.e. its youth) is considered as being one of the main obstacles for the future development of this region. The main causes of emigration, high unemployment rates and especially high youth unemployment rates, are only further perpetrated by the brain drain process." (Grandits 2007)

Despite their level of education, those who migrate to Austria are not always employed in jobs that reflect their qualifications and are more likely to be unemployed than Austrians or migrants from the EU-14 countries. 'Losing' their previous qualifications is the price that migrants very often have to pay. They need much longer

[3] The term 'post-guest worker migration' describes the structure of migration in continuation of the guest worker migration in the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, Austria as well as Germany and Switzerland actively recruited low-qualified blue collar workers to fill gaps in the employment sectors. After the recruitment stopped, this type of low-skilled migration decreased, however, due to family reunification further relatives of the guest workers with similar skill and education profiles came to Western Europe.

Table 7: **Employment of the working-age population by nationality (in %)**

	Austria	Western Europe	EU-10	EU-2	West Balkans	Rest of the world	Total
Self-employed agriculture	4.9	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.2	4.4
Self-employed general	9.2	10.9	11.6	16.8	2.7	8.0	9.1
Blue collar workers	24.6	15.9	41.8	51.7	73.6	57.5	27.5
White collar workers/state officials	61.3	73.0	46.2	31.5	23.6	34.2	59.1
Total	3,682,800	122,873	64,806	34,170	151,261	105,961	4,161,871
Labour force participation rate (15+ population)	58.2	65.1	68.3	63.4	62.5	51.9	58.5
Unemployed in %	3.6	7.4	10.8	10.5	7.3	12.1	4.3

Source: own calculations based on the microcensus of 4/2011 (made available by Statistik Austria)

to establish themselves within the labour market and are much more likely to take on work that does not match their qualifications. Migrants from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe work as waiters, 24-hour care assistants and nurses, hairdressers and housekeepers, builders and technicians, but also as office assistants and qualified workers in the IT sector. One third is salaried employees, more than half are blue-collar workers and in many cases they are self-employed outside agriculture and forestry. Self-employment was in many cases a way to circumvent the transitional migration rules, but sometimes an opportunity to found new businesses, often in construction, transport and personal services.

An aspect beyond the scope of the microcensus is a migrant group that can be seen in public space – often causing debate and discussion – but which is difficult to quantify precisely: beggars, newspaper sellers, people who beg for the coins from supermarket trolleys, homeless people and sex workers (Enengel & Reeger 2015). The public discussion about these groups of migrants has led to an inflated perception of the scale of the problem and an intensified debate about mobility within the EU and the unequal treatments of EU citizens in relation to social transfers.[4]

[4] This debate is almost unavoidable, as social transfers are based on citizen solidarity, which in turn is based on a sense of community and a feeling – supported by the state – of a common 'we'. This is yet to occur on the European level and so non-Austrian EU citizens who draw on social security are considered skeptically, if they have not yet "paid their dues" in the form of tax. A common European identity is still not strong enough to expect solidarity on the matter.

4 Migration expectations in South-East Europe: the Serbian example

This final section looks at the views of potential migrants from South-East Europe; structural characteristics, expectations and perspectives. The relevant empirical groundwork was done as part of a project about democracy in unstable social spaces.[5] At the centre of this project was a survey carried out in November 2010 with approximately 1,200 respondents in Belgrade [Beograd], the Vojvodina and central Serbia about the influence of return migrants on the democratic processes in Serbia, as well as the general attitudes towards emigration in society.[6]

4.1 Extent and structure of those prepared to migrate

"If Serbia becomes a member of the EU, would you leave for another EU country?" was the key question in the investigation of how willing people were to migrate. Of those asked, 6.5% were undecided, 51.8% said 'probably not' or 'definitely no', but 17% said 'probably' and 24.7% said 'definitely yes'. Of course that does not mean that if Serbia were to join the EU that a quarter of the population would simply up and leave, but it does indicate a high level of dissatisfaction amongst the general population with the current situation and the high expectation of a positive outcome if they were to go abroad.

This willingness to migrate was consistent throughout the population. However, two characteristic features seemed to combine, which influenced the decision one way or the other: self-estimation of their own human capital and economic conditions in the region in which they live. Of those questioned in Belgrade, 34.2% said that they would definitely or probably emigrate if Serbians were granted the same working rights within the EU, whilst 50.6% in the economically weaker central Serbia – a region characterised by small-scale farming and a dwindling industry – said that they would.

The second dimension is related to personal characteristics. Older people are well aware of the fact that their employment opportunities abroad would be limited, and were less likely to express interest in potentially migrating (10.6% of people aged 60+). On the other hand, 74.3% of those aged 15-29 responded that they would

[5] The project was led by Prof. Dieter Segert, Vienna University, and financed by the Austrian National Bank and the Federal Ministry for Science and Research (Project number: 13741).

[6] The survey was based on face-to-face interviews conducted by the "Permanent Field Network" of the Centre of Political Sciences and Opinion Research of the Institute of Social Sciences in Belgrade (Institut društvenih nauka). The sample procedure was complicated and contains a stratified random sample of the population in three different regions in Serbia (sample "basic population") and a specific random walk procedure to register return migrants (sample "return migrants").

Table 8: **Age, education and religion of those prepared to emigrate from Serbia (in %)**

	If Serbia becomes a member of the EU, would you leave for another EU country?		
	Definitely, probably	**Undecided**	**Perhaps, definitely not**
Age			
15-29	74.3	8.8	17.0
30-44	54.1	9.9	36.0
45-59	33.3	6.3	60.3
60+	10.6	1.4	88.
Education			
Compulsory schooling	32.7	6.5	60.8
Apprenticeship	39.0	7.3	53.7
Secondary school	47.4	6.8	45.7
University	49.2	5.3	45.5
Religion			
Orthodox	42.3	6.4	51.2
Muslim	47.2	11.1	41.7
Catholic	26.1	4.3	69.6
Other	28.6		71.4
No religion	50.0	3.6	46.4
total	**41.8**	**6.4**	**51.8**

Source: Institut društvenih nauka; own calculations and collections (Sub-sample „basic population"; N=880)

probably move to the EU if it was possible. 47.4% with a secondary education and 49.2% with a tertiary education said that they would use the opportunity to move within the EU if it was available to them.

The final differentiation was in terms of religious beliefs and ethnic background. This has less to do with the personal estimation of their employment opportunities; rather it is an expression of attachment to their home region and the particular living conditions for ethnic minorities. Those respondents that showed a sympathy to the 'western democracy', who considered Serbia to be part of the 'West', viewed a possible EU membership positively, took the question of Kosovo less seriously and in no way looked back positively to the single-party system of the past were those most likely to want to take the advantage of the EU mobility. Orthodox Serbians express a stronger

wish to stay in Serbia than the Muslim population or especially the Catholic Roma. The Roma in particular expressed an above-average willingness to leave Serbia to live in the 'West'.

4.2 Destinations, reasons and expectations

Almost 42% of those who said that they would probably or definitely migrate for work in the EU if the opportunity presented itself, chose the same destinations as the ex-Yugoslavians and later the Serbian migrants were interested in: Germany, Austria and Italy and (of countries not in the EU), Switzerland. The reasons that people showed an interest in these countries was also recorded: better jobs with higher incomes and the opportunities available to people in terms of employment and career are much better. Furthermore, reasons relating to the social welfare state are also mentioned: social security, solidarity and general safety were also seen as pull-factors, along with the wish to live in a democratic state and the guarantee of human rights and – interestingly – a more developed approach to environmental issues. Factors such as the proximity to Serbia and the availability of an ethnic network appeared less prominently.

In light of these plans and expectations it is possible to determine that less than 10% of Serbians who showed a high propensity to emigrate wanted to leave Serbia for less than a year, almost 30% for a period of one to three years, and around 60% for longer than three years, until they retire, or forever. This demonstrates a very high level of dissatisfaction with the living conditions in Serbia, as usually in surveys like this respondents emphasise a shorter period of absence. In reality, these short-term plans often become longer in stages. Such significant willingness to leave for longer periods, or indeed permanently, is unusual.

A further question asked was what people intended to do with the capital gained from their time abroad if they return home. A positive effect for the regional economic development would be if that capital would be invested in new enterprises. In this way, returning migrants would have a stimulating effect and be a dynamic element in regional development. However, such an optimistic assessment was difficult to expect given the answers to the question. One quarter needed their income to support their family and relatives with day-to-day costs; a quarter were saving to be able to build a house or buy property; another quarter mentioned similar uses. The final quarter of those asked wanted to save to establish their own business upon their return.

A final question addressed what general effects might be expected from a period of working abroad. The most commonly given answer was the expectation of an increase in work morale and work ethics. In this way, labour migration was considered an instrument for increasing the country's ability to compete internationally.

Further expectations included improving language skills, increased awareness of green issues, cultural openness and tolerance. At the same time, those willing to leave for work abroad expressed concern that negative effects might be the increased importance of material goods, money and a disproportionate emphasis on the importance of work. Formulated differently: the way of living in Serbia, the importance of the family and friends, as well as the relative unimportance of material goods might be lost should a more 'Western' lifestyle be adopted.

5 Conclusion

All findings and evidence seem to support the conclusion that, despite the historical, political and social differences in South-East Europe the population is now decreasing after decades of population growth, caused by a decline in fertility and continued out-migration. This out-migration is at the same time immigration mostly to Germany, Switzerland and Austria, Italy and Greece. Based on the migration to these countries, it is possible to see that it is young and well-qualified people, often working under the level of their qualifications. However, they send money home to their families, which indirectly contributes to regional stability. Human capital flows in one direction and savings capital in the other, the often complained about 'brain drain' becomes a phenomenon aimed at securing an existence.

In terms of migration policy, it is also noteworthy that South-East Europe and Western Europe form a functionally united migration space, which neither the countries of origin nor destination wish to acknowledge. There is no systematic exchange of data between the statistics agencies, no mobility partnerships with the third countries of South-East Europe and no regular meetings between those responsible for the social policy in the home and destination countries of the migrants that could support a real migration process.

Migration could become a 'triple-win' situation where migrants, home regions and destination countries all benefit. However, that would require political collaboration and include migration management that incorporates such aspects as the ability to transfer pension entitlements, data exchange, the recognition of qualifications or perhaps assistance for returning migrants and related economic development measures. There is – at best – the beginning of attempts in this direction, however, a common political approach to this topic is still – unfortunately – a long way off.

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